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ALL FOR FRANCE

EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS
OF A FRENCH ARTILLERY OFFICER





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ALL FOR FRANCE





WOUNDED SHARPSHOOTERS

ALL FOR FRANCE

*Extracts from the Letters of
a French Artillery Officer*

PUBLISHED FOR THE EDITOR

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H. B. 13 Jan 1917

IN EXPLANATION

Early in the Fall of 1913 I met by chance a very interesting French gentleman, a mining engineer by profession, and a reserve Artillery Officer.

Our acquaintance grew into a friendship that I valued highly and then I lost sight of him until late in November, 1914, when I learned that he had answered the call to the colors, and had been wounded at the Battle of the Marne. He recovered and took part in the continuous fighting on the West Front.

From time to time he wrote me, and for a while sent me photographs taken on the Battle Line.

Then came a long silence; then the

dreaded black bordered letter from his widow, telling of "the glorious death of my beloved husband" and how "at the battle of Bois Bourrus a bursting shell caused a wound that cost him his life and put his splendid work to a sudden end."

It seems that on the evening of the ninth of April, 1916, in the presence of his regiment, he was named as Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and presented with the War Cross. On the following day, during a terrific bombardment near Verdun, he was mortally wounded and died on the Field of Battle.

His widow and two children are uncomplainingly facing the future, with only the memory of his bravery to help. They are penniless, yet ask for nothing, but as his friend I feel it my duty to try and assist them.

I have therefore taken it upon myself to publish the following extracts from his letters, together with a few reproductions of the photographs, without asking leave, but with the thought that if his name was not mentioned, no one could object, and that by the sale of this little volume I might aid his loved ones.

To those who purchase a copy I can only say that within its pages I believe they will see the Spirit of France, the France that is battling for us and for Civilization, and I know they will help the family of one who has made the Supreme Sacrifice.

W. B. M

Summit, N. J.,

October 31st, 1916.

I

ALL FOR FRANCE

ALL FOR FRANCE

November 17, 1914

My dear Friend:

I have been fighting like hell since August, and have been badly wounded with two shots through the leg and chest, am recovering and hope to leave again for the front within two weeks. The present war is the hugest slaughtering of human lives you could ever dream about. Simply horrid.

I expect to leave for New York with wife and children after the war and have a new start then, as my business like others has been dropped to the dogs.

Hope to hear soon of you,

Yours as ever,

II

28 April, 1915

My dear M——:

You ask me so insistently to give you my impressions upon the war that we wage at the present time against Germany, that I have decided at last to comply with your wish. I shall do my best to set aside all passion, and shall try to tell you simply of the events to which I have attended since the beginning of our mobilization, in short, my journal of impressions, and of hours powerfully lived. You have had in the United States every possible particular concerning the actual war, in the form of official statements or accounts of war correspondents. I am not in a position to give you any official information, and could I do so, my duty as officer would forbid it;

but, as I told you, you shall have my store of hours powerfully lived; and the whole will give you an exact idea of the terrible effort which France has given and gives yet to drive back the Invader and liberate its Northern Territory.

As you know, after a year of heavy mining prospecting work in Venezuela in the Orinoco River basin,— I came back to New York and went from there to Canada. I sailed for France in June, 1914, to get a couple of months' rest with my wife and children before starting again on my wandering life of mining engineer. I found my lovely Paris just as elegant and careless as ever, a thousand miles from suspecting the dreadful events that were brewing. Everybody was living in a dream of peace.



FIRST AID

The first serious incident that seemed to shake the sleep of public opinion was the "ultimatum" of Austria to Servia; suddenly Paris became anxious and without yet believing that Germany would interfere, every one started to hunt for ready cash, in spite of a heavy fall on the Stock Exchange; optimistic Government statements were published and the population became quieter; general opinion at that time was that everything would be all right within a short time, the Diplomatic tension was nothing else than a German Bluff similar to the one we had at Agadir and on several other occasions. The days of the thirtieth and thirty-first of July passed with the same state of mind, everybody was talking of a possible partial mobilization, but in a low

voice, feeling that it was a matter of small importance, and only intended to counterbalance the military preparations in Germany, which of course were generally denied. In short, public apprehension had subsided and we were waiting patiently for an amicable Diplomatic solution.

On the morning of the first of August the newspapers, carefully censored, seemed to foretell a very near issue to the crisis. To give you an idea of the blindness in which we were living, let me tell you that on the twentieth of July, I refused to sell an important block of shares I owned in the Belgium Iron Works, in spite of a very advantageous offer; and the result has been for me a net considerable loss, for the works have been entirely destroyed by the Germans.

Should I live a hundred years, I would still keep in mind the afternoon of the first of August when the mobilization placards were posted. On that afternoon, I was busy with our Manager and my assistant discussing the drawings for a new dredge which we expected to build and ship to South America for gold washing, when suddenly about 3.30 P. M. the porter of the works rushed into the drawing room, like a hurricane, shouting and yelling, "The mobilization order has been posted; the war! the war!" At first we didn't understand what the man was talking about, and were staring at him stupidly. "The war! What do you mean by the war! You must be crazy!" But the porter, cooling down, started again. "Excuse me,

gentlemen, the general mobilization order has been posted, I saw it myself, and, believe me, I am quite sober. That means the war with Germany!"

We jumped up — all three together — and for over a minute were unable to utter a single word, and it was between us a tragic and poignant silence. Then the Manager picked up the drawings scattered on the table and told me simply, with a sob in his voice: "Mr. C., you are an artillery officer; you can't lose a minute. I'll lend you my motor car which is waiting for me at the door, for I guess you will have to get ready and leave to join your Regiment at once. Good luck to you!" And I left after a silent shake of the hand. I drove to Paris. I have to confess that the

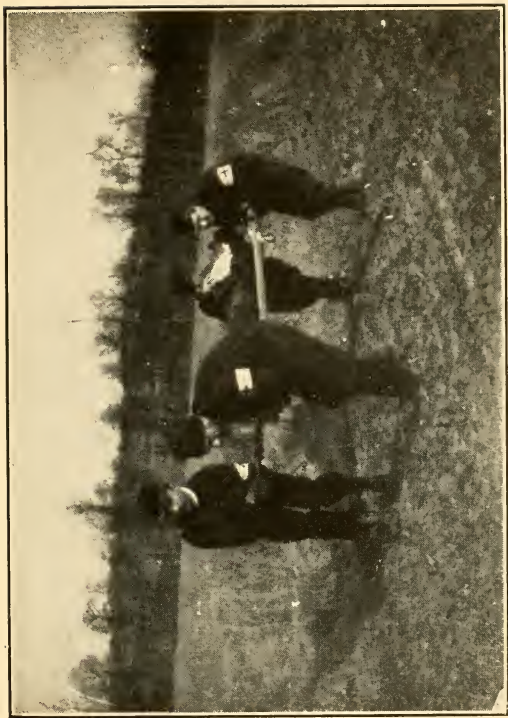
sensation which arose in me, once the first shock of the news had passed, was a terrible rage against Destiny. I had been abroad for eighteen months. I had been near death with a pernicious fever in Venezuela; I returned to France to take a rest and had sent my wife and children to Biarritz, and I now had to join my regiment in South France, leaving all my business on the spot, with neither time nor authorisation to see my loved ones. I was simply exasperated. We drove with the motor car through the suburbs of Paris at frightful rapidity, and I keep of this debauch of speed a vision of poignant gloominess. Everywhere women crying, the men serious and pale; some of them had already their packet on the shoulder and were proceeding to the

nearest railway station; not a single sound arose from the crowd. The people had already realised the terrible fight we would have to sustain. I reach the gates of the "Bois de Boulogne"—the crowd gets denser and denser. I have to stop for the town duties. A woman speaks to me: "I am from Alsace, sir; I saw the war in 1870; I have only one son left, and he is sick in bed. My God! I would give away anything I have got left to see him in good condition, and in shape to help his country." Poor, dear old woman, her son may be now like so many others lying somewhere in Alsace, Champagne, or in the Flanders. I arrive at my mother's house and find there the most extraordinary hubbub. My five brothers are already packing in a

hurry, yelling and shouting and singing, my anger is over like a shot; and suddenly an immense explosion of joy bursts out while we start dancing an unbridled cake-walk. I catch a large jug, fill it with all kinds of liqueurs and champagne; the mixture is at once called the "Revanche Cocktail," and we all of us touch glasses, singing the "Marseillaise" and the "Song of Departure." Being the eldest son (I am 39 years old), I begin speaking and recommend to my brothers to do more than their duty, and after a last embrace we separate, making of course a general appointment at "Berlin."

The approaches of the railway station are packed with a dense crowd; the people have cast aside anguish; girls and women smile through their

tears, and shoot flowers, the splendid French spirit ironical and jocular appears again, not a single dissonant note. The civilian use of trains is interrupted during the mobilization; hereafter all the public services are under military control. I cut with the greatest difficulty a passage through the crowd; a girl takes me for an "Englishman" with my shaved "moustache" and laughingly asks me what England intends to do. The question arouses interest; everybody surrounds me awaiting my answer. I told her that I was simply an artillery officer leaving Paris to join his regiment, and immediately a cheering burst forth—"Hurrah for the artillery, hurrah for our 75 gun." The girl asks me to send her a German helmet, gives me by force her



RED CROSS WORK

address and I have to accept a Holy Medal that she wore around her neck. I promise her all she wants and I am lucky enough to escape.

The mobilization train is ready, without any distinction of class. The compartments are taken by assault and packed with twice as many soldiers as they were intended for. A whistle, and we leave at very low speed, as the trains run one after other without interruption. For twenty-four hours I travel through a part of France, which I shall cross again in six days to join my comrades at the front. During these twenty-four hours we see going north a single ribbon of trains speeding at the same rate of fourteen miles an hour. The human tide slides up to the frontier in the fever of the glori-

ous end of the day. The heat is terrible.

Yours,
C—

III

May 4, 1915.

My dear M——:

I left Paris the first of August, 1914, on the first day of mobilization, at 7 P. M., to join my Regiment. By this glorious end of day we were fifteen packed in a firstclass compartment. All kinds of officers; artillery, cavalry, infantry. With my thirty-nine years, I was far the older. From the start the conversation became general, we were all of the same grade, except a cavalry captain, back from England, who had a call the day before the mobilization to join his regiment at once. The same enthusiasm, the same faith in the victory united all of us in an immovable confidence. At least we were going to have a decent fight.

We discussed the conditions by which the first shock should occur; the French town of Nancy ought to be at the present time besieged. We were all of course persuaded that the German plan consisted in a dense and formidable rush on that important city, only a few kilometres distant from the German frontier.

How far we were from the reality!

If one had foretold us the invasion of Belgium and the violation of its neutrality, we should have called him a madman and a visionary. In our mind Belgium was absolutely safe, having its neutrality solemnly proclaimed by all the Powers. Our general opinion was that a gigantic battle would break out somewhere in Champagne to decide the fate of both countries, a battle that might last for

several days until the annihilation of one of the adversaries. In short, we were all persuaded that the war, because of the power of the destructive engines employed, could only last three months, or a maximum of four.

We were speeding at a slow and monotonous rate, every ten minutes we passed a train packed with soldiers cheering and singing. The stations were crowded with people; women, children, old men, they all came to cheer the passing of the Defenders of our National soil; and they all fought to present us flowers, wine and provisions. Every start from the station was the prelude of an indescribable enthusiasm. And the journey went on for twenty-four hours, most of my travelling companions had left me, others had re-

placed them, we were always packed. I arrived at the town of —, headquarters of my Regiment, something about 7 P. M. I jumped from the train, called for a Porter and proceeded at once to the barracks. I have to say that from that time starts my "Campaign Journal," upon which I have faithfully laid down each one of the hours lived since the second of August, 1914, with simple notes written hastily; I have tied myself down to keep a daily record in spite of the fatigue, and it is a joy for me to read it again, for my "Campaign Journal" has been for me a faithful and devoted Friend; the most intimate confidant of glorious hours and hours of poignant gloominess.

I reached the Headquarters about 7:30 P. M., and although it was late



ON THE LOOKOUT



I found an extraordinary bustle. Everybody is at work, an incessant work that will last four days till our departure for the front. I present myself to the Colonel, quite a young man, hardly fifty years old. He shakes hands with me, and says to me with a cheerful tone: "Well, you are a man, you didn't lose a minute to join us, I only expected you to-morrow. Get busy at once, for we have to leave in four days. You are attached as Lieutenant to the Battery No.—and have to leave early to-morrow morning to preside over the requisition of horses. Everything must be ready within two days. Now go and present yourself to your Captain."

I found the Captain and my fellow Lieutenant in the yard of the Head-

quarters, rapid presentation, squeezing of the hand, etc. I told him what the orders of the Colonel were, asked him to give me an "orderly," whom I sent to the Hotel to reserve me a room, and take care of my bags, saddle, etc. There is nothing else for me to do at the quarters, so I leave for the town after having ordered a military motorcar to be at the Hotel early in the morning. The town is crowded, the population seems to have tripled, everybody is out of doors, and the noise is deafening. Military wagons speed at full trot loaded with all kinds of goods. Motor cars hiss past every moment, couriers carrying military orders hurry by, an intense fever of excitement spreads over the mob. I dine in fine style at the Officers'

Club; I am starving, having had no meal since midday; I order hastily a light cold supper, while all the officers ask me eagerly my impressions about my journey and what is going on in Paris. I leave for the Hotel at 11, and find always the same crowd in the streets; at a crossroad a popular singer starts the "Marseillaise," everybody takes his hat off and joins in the chorus of our national song.

The next day, early in the morning, after a few hours of deep rest, all my fatigue has gone, I find the motor car with a driver and two sub-officers in front of the Hotel. We start at full speed on our 100 kilometre trip to visit the different requisition centres. All the work has already been prepared, I have the lists in

hand, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon I have the satisfaction of having finished my part of the job. All the dependable horses necessary to complete our effectives have been examined and are proceeding to the quarters, where they will arrive the next morning. I drive to the town again, to make my report to the Colonel. I am free until tomorrow morning where I have to come in touch with my "Section," and put everything in order for the general review that takes place the day after, twenty-four hours before our departure.

In the meantime, having time to spare before supper at the Club, I select my mount for the campaign. After rapid inspection of the non-affected horses, I found a chestnut mare, seven years old, of the "Anglo-

Arab" type, exactly what I wanted, being a light weight. The mare has the reputation of being a little bit stubborn, and that decided me. I have been more than satisfied with her, and feel inclined to believe that the best training for stubborn horses is a fifteen days' campaign without taking the saddle off day and night. Nothing better to make an animal supple and have it afterwards as mild as a sheep. I try the mare for an hour in the riding yard. I am satisfied, she is a fine jumper, and that may help in the future. I enter the Club, where we all meet for supper. No official news of the war. It is said that our first line troops have entered Alsace, that the Russians have invaded Germany with their "Cossacks." It is said that a French

aviator has blown up a Zeppelin, the most extraordinary stories are told, without a well-defined origin, and always the enthusiasm grows and grows. At midnight I leave for the Hotel.

The day after, the fourth of August, I walk to the quarters, early in the morning, and bring my "section" together. The men are confident, and work with a supreme intensity, most of them are highlanders, small, agile and robust; and being accustomed to judge the value of a man at first sight, I am more than satisfied with them. I shall do some good work, everything is right.

The next day comes general review. The Colonel goes thoroughly through each "section," he is satisfied. Our 75 millimetre guns are

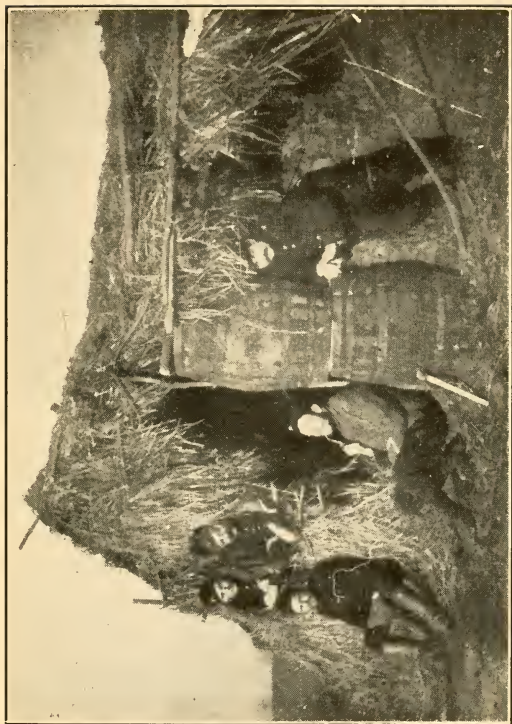
ready to go at work, their silhouettes stretch out, painted with a light grey colour, like the neck and shoulders of a thoroughbred horse. Each gun is decorated with flowers tied together with a tricoloured ribbon.

The whole regiment is in line, battery by battery, the Colonel is going to present the "Standard" to the troops. The ringing "to the standard" resounds, a brief command to present arms rolls from section to section, and the Sacred Emblem of the Regiment is brought to the Front of the Troops, framed in its Guard of Honour. The sun is glorious, the air is blazing, and a panting breath of pride and passion runs over the Regiment; in spite of us, a sob shakes and binds every one of us.

The Colonel begins speaking and

makes a short address impressed with the most pure and vibrating patriotism. "My children," ends he, "remember that this Standard is the Sacred Emblem of your Regiment, that has never failed to do its Duty for over a hundred years, since it has been organised; it bears in its folds the whole glory of our beautiful country of France, you must defend it to your last breath; I know that you take the most sacred oath to do it. My dear children, God save France and glory to you." We are moved like children and most of us burst into sobs.

It is a ceremony that can't be forgotten, and worth all the lives sacrificed to lead us to the victory. We all separate, too much oppressed with an unspeakable emotion to think of



OBSERVATION HUT

anything else than our personal preparations. For we have to leave the next day at 6 o'clock in the morning for the Front.

Yours very truly,
C—

IV

June 11, 1915

My dear M——:

At 3 A. M. on August sixth I arise and confiding the packing of my personal baggage to my orderly tell him to have it at the railway station at 8. At my battery quarters I find everything ready. Tricolour cockades in the men's caps, the horses adorned with flowers and everything decorated as for a national feast. At 4 o'clock sharp, with the music ahead of us we leave our quarters. The streets are crowded, and long before we appear we hear the cheering. In spite of the early hour the whole population is out.

We proceed to the station and to the platforms prepared for embarkation, the men are grave and a little

bit nervous, for most of them are from the neighbourhood, and their wives and sweethearts are waiting to bid them a last fond adieu.

We embark immediately.

First the horses, eight to a car, then the guns, carts, ammunition wagons, etc., the wheels held tight by wedges nailed to the car platforms. Everything runs as smoothly as the practice in peace times, for the men are well trained.

At six-thirty this work is finished, the men repair to the cars to which they have been assigned, and the officers to the cars reserved for them. A bugle sounds and we are off amidst the cheers and tears of the crowd and the waving of the handkerchiefs.

We are gone! For twenty-four hours we shall be part of that tide

of men, moving toward the Northern part of France, and our railroad journey ends with our embarkation a few miles south of Luneville where we await the other batteries of our regiment.

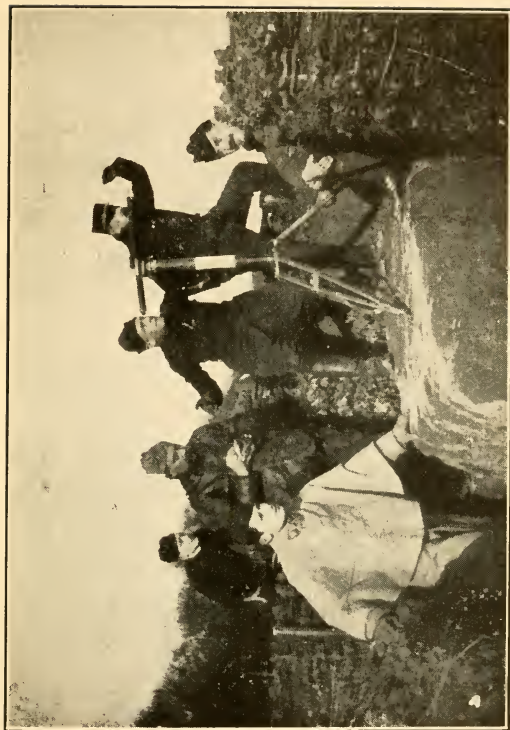
Our journey had been made through suffocating heat, and was only remarkable for the extraordinary enthusiasm of the crowds packed in the railway stations, to watch our train and many others. I never had thought to see such a sight, I never had thought of a patriotism so vivid, so general, so splendid.

At every step in spite of most severe orders, men, women and children broke down the police lines, stormed the cars and showered us with all kinds of presents, wines, provisions and flowers.

In the meantime the first real news of the war reaches us. The Germans have invaded Belgium, and England has declared war on Germany. We must be veterans already, even before fighting, for nothing astounds us, and the succession of big events has blunted our minds.

It is said that our troops are in Alsace, and that the Russians are entering into East Prussia at full speed. Well, everything seems to be in fine shape, the war won't last long, and in a few months peace will be declared.

Within an hour of our arrival we are disembarked, the train steams away and we march to our new concentration camp 10 kilometres from the station. The roads are crowded with artillery and cavalry, and the in-



COMPUTING THE ELEVATION OF A "TAUBE"

fantry are marching through the fields. It all seems like a large manœuvre on Bastile Day. Finally our guns are placed beneath the trees of a plum orchard to hide them from German aeroplanes and the men are crowded into a barn. Every one hunts for a place, and with my three brother officers I occupy a small room in the farm house about the size that would accommodate one man. No bed in sight, so my orderly brings in a few trusses of hay and my sleeping sack, consisting of four sheepskins, sewed together, the fur inside and lined with waterproof linen. Most precious invention, that I have used in mining camp days and that is destined to help me bear the inclemencies of the weather in the trenches in the days to come.

That night and the next day our other batteries arrive and are quartered in the neighbourhood. Our regiment is together again, but before proceeding forward we await for several days until our army is completely mobilized.

I took profit of the few days' rest I was obliged to take, to come into a more intimate contact with my men. The first thing I did was to take my meals with them, just as if I was an ordinary soldier. We talked together on friendly terms, each one told me of his life, and little by little the family which we had to form during the whole campaign, spreads out and gets consistent. I knew that the only way of obtaining the best from the men was to learn of their life and have all their confidence. The

man, simple soldier, who sees his officer sleeping on the same straw, bearing the same privations as he, devotes always to him an unlimited gratitude.

This has always been one of the fundamental principles of my military life, and I always have had results beyond my expectations.

The 9th of August passes without anything special happening. We are advised in the evening that we are to leave our quarters on the 11th, at daybreak. On the 10th I had my first vision of the war. We heard about noon that a spy had been caught in the morning. The proofs were beyond discussion, and the execution had to take place in the afternoon, in the yard of a neighbouring farm. Although the sight should not be in itself particularly attractive,

I wanted to be a spectator. I arrive about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the execution section is ready, the spy is brought forth, assisted by a priest. He is fair complexioned, the hair long and uncombed, and he wore a bristly beard, his look is repulsive; the eyes are rolling in all directions like those of a bird of prey caught in a trap. His hands are bound behind his back. He is allowed to speak for a few minutes to the priest, afterwards is placed in front of the wall facing the execution section. He seems to be resigned and I am obliged to recognise in him a man highly educated; his look is now steady and he is facing straight ahead of him. A poignant silence and a pang binds the whole of us for a few seconds, a brief command, a discharge of musketry,

the man falls down, an inert body, the face against the earth. It's over, he has paid the penalty of infamy. May God keep his soul!

I came back to the quarter with my friend, Captain X—— who was with me. The weather was glorious, what a contrast! We couldn't say a single word, each one following his own thoughts. We separate after a silent and sad hand shake. The next day, early in the morning we leave with our "Division," the night and the rest have dulled the bad impression of yesterday, the weather is still glorious. We have to pass through the Town of "Luneville" and have our first step out of town. "Luneville" is full of soldiers, the population is grave, we are far from the exuberance of the cities we had crossed

before. 'Two hours' rest out of town we leave again to arrive at night at the Village of X—— on the river "Vezouze." Our first stage is over, two days more and from what people tell us, we shall get into contact with the Germans.

Early on the morning of the fifteenth of August we received orders to go forward. The Germans were some 10 miles from us and we had to support our infantry. We left at full speed, the men were as nervous as blazes, the cavalry (Dragoons) went ahead of us to inspect the country. We heard rifle shooting but no artillery. In an hour orders came to place in Battery our guns behind a small hillock, to start at once the digging of rough protection trenches, and to be ready for action.

We took our firing position and got ready at once. It was about 8 A. M. We waited for three hours and heard far, far away a strong rifle firing. An order came to proceed again and take a new position two miles northwest; we proceeded and the same digging job came on. Nothing happened. The men were laughing, "Is this all that war is!" We changed position seven times more up to 6 o'clock P. M. At our last position the men refused to dig the trenches and I had to admonish them severely, but I was myself disgusted. Just at the same moment an aeroplane came in sight and while we were discussing whether it was a French or German one, it dropped over our heads a fuse that gave out a heavy black smoke. We didn't

realise what it meant, when suddenly we heard in front of us a noise similar to a trolley running on an aerial wire, and at once at 300 yards in front of us 12 shells burst on the same horizontal line, with an ashy, grey dense smoke. By leaps of 50 yards with the same regularity they proceeded to our lines, 10 seconds between each leap. By Jove! we had no trenches, we had no orders as to where the Germans could be, very awkward position! The captain had left me the command of the Battery while searching for an Observatory. I took my decision like a shot; we had to take our chances between two leaps of 50 yards, and moreover I realised that the shells were bursting too high to be really dangerous, so I forwarded the order to lie down under



YOUNG REFUGEES

the guns, and believe me this was done without any discussion. The men were looking at me with wide open eyes, and I lit a cigarette to give them an impression of coolness, which I hardly felt. The squall passed over us, nobody was killed. A single man had a bullet in the shoulder and that was all. As we did not fire the leaps passed back of us. Just after that the telephone rang and the order came with "with explosive shells, at 2500 metres open the fire," and the particulars for firing were given. The men jumped to their guns. 2500 was the first volley, 2700 the second one, 2600, 2650. After 1 minute and 10 seconds the regulating firing was finished and we started the efficiency firing at 2650 metres. The command was "By four, now, 2650"

that means 4 explosive shells to be fired at 2650 metres for each gun; "mow" means displace the gun on an axle perpendicular to the trajectory, so as to give after each one of the four shots a displacement (on a horizontal line) of $\frac{3}{1000}$ of the distance. This is done by turning a hand wheel which the master gunner (aimer or pointeur in French) has under his control. We fired 4 shots per gun at a new range of 2675 metres and for 10 minutes worked in the same manner, by leaps of 25 metres (from 2650 to 2700 metres). Now if you realise that each gun was firing at the rate of 20 shots a minute you may imagine what our Battery of 4 guns did. After the first volley of 4 shots the Germans stopped firing. We

couldn't investigate ourselves what had been the effect of our fire, but from what we heard afterward, the 12 German guns had been badly damaged. This has been our firing baptism, and I am proud of it. The men were mad with joy and immense confidence spreads over us, so true it is that the first step has a decisive action on the future. My captain told me that his observatory point was less than 800 yards from the German guns, on top of a tree. It is needless to say that after this the soldiers had for supper a double ration of wine and brandy.

There's another wonderful action I want to tell you about that took place on the twenty-fifth of August, an action which made us capture 17 (77 millimetre) German guns, which

are now at Belfort, and destroy 7 more, a total of 24 guns. Three Batteries of our Regiment were waiting in a firing position about 8 A. M. when the Major saw 4 German Batteries (6 guns per Battery) of 77 Millimetre guns taking their firing position at about 3000 yards from us. They must have been crazy, as they were in a bad position in open land, just protected from sight by a small curtain of apple trees.

Only just were they in Battery that we started shelling them, only one volley, and stopped. The Germans fled with the teams of horses leaving the guns. Our Major then did something exceedingly clever. He guessed that by stopping firing the Germans would believe that they had been shelled by mistake and that

certainly they would return during the day to get their guns. So we took the exact distance from our Batteries to the guns, and sent one officer up a tree to observe and 'phone us if anything should happen. We waited the whole day in a nervous state that was growing from hour to hour. At 5 P. M. the 'phone rang and the "Observer" advised us that a few Germans appeared on a hill inspecting the neighbourhood. They didn't find anything suspicious and went back. Quarter of an hour later the teams appeared with horses to haul back the guns. We waited until everything was ready on their side for leaving, and the "Observer" 'phoned us. "Explosive shells by 4 mow, 3150 metres." We fired like Hell! 3150, 3175, 3200, 3150, etc., for five

minutes. The rate of firing was tremendous as all the explosive shells were prepared and ready. I went myself after the shelling to investigate the result of our firing. My dear old friend, I never saw such a sight; the only thing alive was a horse, over 300 Germans were crushed to pieces and beyond recognition. I found legs, arms, etc., covering the spot. The Commander had his head in two parts cut off over the eyebrows. Seven guns were destroyed, 17 damaged but could be hauled. We blew up the ammunition wagons and brought the 17 guns to our quarters, and they are now at Belfort for Public exhibition.

Yours,
C—

TOMBE AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR

Nous donnons, ci-après, le texte d'une citation dont a été l'objet le lieutenant ~~Frédéric François Combemale~~, de l'Artillerie lourde, frappé à mort devant Verdun :

« A été nommé dans l'ordre de la Légion d'honneur au grade de chevalier.

« Engagé volontaire pour la durée de la guerre, au front depuis Novembre 1914, s'est fait remarquer par son courage tranquille et son absolu mépris du danger, toujours à la recherche des missions dangereuses et de nouveaux postes d'observation pour découvrir les objectifs ennemis. A été blessé grièvement le 10 avril 1916 en soutenant une attaque sous un violent bombardement. »

(La présente nomination comporte l'attribution de la Croix de guerre avec palme.)

Signé : JOFFRE.

Le lieutenant ~~Combemale~~, qui s'était déjà signalé par son sang-froid et son courage, dans maintes occasions, reçut la Croix d'honneur la veille du jour où il fut mortellement blessé, près des pièces de sa batterie.

Il laisse une veuve et deux enfants. Sa femme, depuis le début de la guerre, n'a cessé de donner ses soins les plus dévoués aux blessés de nos formations. Elle compte parmi le personnel féminin du Sacré-Cœur, dont on ne saurait assez faire l'éloge. Sa sœur dirige, avec la dévouement le plus éclairé, l'hôpital de Lescar.

Nous adressons à cette famille, qui compte encore cinq de ses membres sur le front, l'hommage de nos condoléances les plus sympathiques.

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